

# JUST THE FACTS

## PARENTS AND PEER PRESSURE

AN EDUCATIONAL FACT SHEET FROM  
THE FLORIDA ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE ASSOCIATION

### FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

Parents are the best protection young people have against alcohol and drug abuse. Strong family support helps children develop the personal values and self esteem they need to resist peer pressure to use drugs. Yet despite the best efforts of parents, children can still be strongly influenced by their peers.

Children need accurate information about drugs and alcohol. This doesn't mean parents must be experts. It does mean having enough facts to support your views. Don't wait until they are involved with drugs or alcohol to initiate discussions with your children. Talk to them before there is a problem.

Most children have some knowledge of the effects of drugs and alcohol as early as the first grade and increased awareness of alcohol and drug issues. Some of their information will be inaccurate and may glamorize drug or alcohol use. Parents must be prepared to set the record straight. Children need to be reminded often of where their parents stand on important issues such as the use of alcohol and other drugs.

### WHEN DRUG/ALCOHOL USE IS SUSPECTED

If you think your child is abusing drugs, express your concerns in a straightforward way. Be understanding, firm and supportive. It is necessary to examine your own drug and alcohol habits to see if you set a bad example for your child.

Don't be sarcastic, accusatory, sympathy-seeking or self-blaming. Such statements make children defensive and more likely to tune you out.

If your child is using drugs, she or he needs your help. As the parent of a child in

crisis, you can benefit from outside help to deal with your own confusion, frustration, fear and pain. Seek the support of other parents in your community to help you handle this problem in an understanding and helpful way.

### WORKING WITH OTHER PARENTS

People, organized into groups, achieve results they could not reach working as individuals. Groups also provide the added benefits of strength and fellowship gained when people work together for common goals. Some of the most effective organizations are those that are motivated for self-help and/or idealistic purposes.

Parent groups are based on the idea that the most effective way to stop a child from using drugs and alcohol is to stop his or her friends from using them. Children take drugs and use alcohol for many reasons, including pressure from peers, easy access to drugs and lack of awareness of the dangers associated with using alcohol and other drugs.

Parent groups typically provide:

- Education. Research and information sharing on drugs and the hazards of drug use
- Support. Emotional support to others coping with their children's drug problems
- Community action to enlist the support and cooperation of local and state governments, school officials and businesses to stop drug abuse
- Supervision for children to make sure they stay free of alcohol and drugs

Your community may already have active parent groups. Parent/teacher organizations

(PTO's) are usually helpful in providing education and support to parents in need. So are many civic groups and support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-anon, Al-ateen and Narcotics Anonymous, which are listed in the phone book. Look to your community to see what resources are available and find out how to access their services.

If your community lacks resources, consider starting an organization. Before beginning a parent group, it is important to establish strategies and priorities. Asking these questions will help:

- Why start a parent group? Is there a need for a group in this area?

- What do we want to accomplish?
- How do we plan to reach our goals?
- How much time and effort are we willing to commit?
- Are there others in the community who share our views and concerns?

Parents should not feel that the drug problem is too big to do anything about. All over the country parents are discovering the effectiveness of united action. Parents can help stop drug abuse if they make the necessary commitment of time and energy.



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**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL THE FLORIDA ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE ASSOCIATION RESOURCE CENTER  
1030 EAST LAFAYETTE STREET, SUITE 100, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32301 TEL: (904) 878-2196**